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COUNTRY Poland/USSR

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and Waste/Wages/Living Conditions/Workers' Attitudes

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Production

2. "In Nov 53 only a few sections of Nowa Huta were ready and finished. In fact, the real state of the gigantic enterprise does not correspond at all with the huge Communist propaganda. The sections ready in Nov 1953 were the cable sections, repair workshops and some electric sections. Certain production was going on in the steel foundry and the iron foundry. Also ready was the mechanical section with a blacksmith shop and some secondary production (produkcyjna pomocnicza) eg of fireproof materials. The electric power station (siownia) was ready, but the chief transformer station was only partly ready.

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3. "The large smelting furnaces were still unfinished. Nowa Huta had not produced a single kilogram of steel. The foundries were to go in full operation in spring 1954. Their only production has been for the construction of Nowa Huta itself. They have smelted scrap iron for the production of spare parts to complete or repair the machines from the USSR. The lack of equipment has been so great, that old machinery has even been dug up from factories destroyed during World War II. This machinery has been put into some sort of order and used at Nowa Huta. This has created difficulties because all the machines are of different types, but that cannot be helped. Old machines have also been used to complete Soviet machines.
4. "The press and propaganda meetings round Poland praise the Soviet machines by which 'Nowa Huta has been built'. This official Communist propaganda gives the impression that all the machines are of Soviet origin. This is not true, and the machines obtained from the USSR, as of Nov 53, were of inferior quality. But by no word do the Communists mention that most of the best machines are of US, German, British, Swiss, Italian or even Polish origin. The electric motors are executed /Sic/ by US spychacze (bulldozers?) of the type Turnazol (?) which the workers used to call 'Turadozer'. The Bucyrusy are Italian, produced by Fiat. Soviet Stalincey were also used for earthworks, but they were of a much inferior quality to the US and Italian machines. Power machines are partly of Italian and partly of Swedish or German origin. The more simple, usual machines in the electric section are of Soviet origin. Soviet technique is too old-fashioned. The machines are old-fashioned and work badly. This is also the case with all Soviet tools (okruszaki). All precision apparatus used at Nowa Huta is not of Soviet origin.
5. "The dust pans (Kotly pylowe) in the electric section (na silowni) are of Soviet origin, but they have been copied from old German Borsigs and Steindillers. The lifts (dziwigi) at Nowa Huta are of German origin; there is not a single Soviet lift. The furnaces (kotly) are indeed Soviet, but copied from older German types. The workers looking at the old-fashioned Soviet types, comparing them with others imported from the West, could not help saying every time the propagandists spoke of the 'advanced Soviet technique' ('Przedni technika sowiecka').
6. Production Difficulties, Shortages, Waste
"Lack of organization, incompetent management, shortages and waste of time and material characterize the Nowa Huta project. The workers say that if capitalists were constructing Nowa Huta, they would have built two foundries like it for the money that has been spent so far.
7. "Never before has such waste (marnotrawstwo) of materials and working hours been seen in Poland. Nobody cares, for instance, about the lumber used for the foundations; nobody bothers to take it away. Tremendous quantities of lumber alone have been needlessly spoiled.
8. "The plant suffers from a shortage of manpower. This was true, for example, of the firm which did the electric installations at Nowa Huta. The same firm had another office in Krakow. Workers who called upon this firm in Krakow were turned away because the firm did not need workers in Krakow. But nobody told the same workers that 13 kilometers from Krakow the same firm needed electrical workers badly.

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9. "Control is ineffective. Workers and foremen conspire together. When some section must quickly complete or perform work in order not to stop work for another section, it is permitted to work overtime. Then the workers do their work in the normal hours, go home, but register at the office a number of hours done overtime at night, which in fact is a fiction. If an inspector arrives, the foreman says that the workers have just finished work and left for home. Or he says that they cannot work because they are short of material. Shortages of material, or delays in deliveries of materials often stop work in a section. It can happen in such cases that the workers do nothing for some days - just crawl around in the building, but get paid nevertheless. At the same time in some other section, the workers are being pressed to do inhuman work in order not to delay the fulfillment of some plan.
10. "The exploitation of adolescents and women is great. They are also used as electrical instrument makers, a work for which they are not fit and not properly trained. The result is bad work.
11. [redacted] when the oil for transformers stood for a long time unprotected and got spoilt. Another time, when the transformers had to be oiled, it was discovered that the tanks with the oil had gone to some other part of Poland. The transformer section even had no measuring-scales. The storehouse had some, but refused to deliver one, saying that they had been promised to some other section. But workers did not care much about this. They attempted no improvisations, stopped work and waited until the tanks, the measuring-scales and the oil arrived. (Literal Polish text: 'Zwykle olej do transformatorów leżał, jak przyleciał zapelniasz olejem urządzają, wyle, czyli transformatorów, okazało się że zbiorniki nie był przygotowane, tanki pojechali do innej części Polski. Ale ci nie nie przyjmował. Pono było nie było. Nowe urządzenia elektryczne...')
12. "The young engineers fresh from colleges, have had no practical experience. The managers at the construction change every few months, as nobody can stand the general chaos. When all is too much delayed, the workers get paid by the hour in order to get them to do the work properly. In normal cases, when a firm gets into difficulties, a worker would help the firm. But at Nowa Huta nobody cares. We used to say, 'If the management has not planned in this, why should we kill ourselves on their behalf?'
13. "Workers prefer tools. Sometimes they are forced to do so. Nowa Huta has its own production of oxygen. But Nowa Huta uses much more oxygen than the little oxygen factory is able to produce. Other cities do not deliver oxygen to Nowa Huta, as they need it for themselves. So Nowa Huta is always short of oxygen. Workers, in order to do their work, steal the oxygen from each other. Everybody wants to do his job in order to fulfil the norm and get the pay. So the foreman (brigadzista) who is short of oxygen, comes earlier to work and steals it from somebody else. The brigades which are left without any have to remain idle that day.
14. "The aluminum rails shipped to Nowa Huta were of poor quality and could not be used. There are no experts for this sort of rail. So normal old-fashioned rails were used to replace the aluminum rails, which the workers had to remove. (Literal Polish text: 'Zamiast zwykłych szyn z miedzi zrobiono szyny aluminiowe na rozdzielnic 6 kilowolt. Te szyny aluminiowe zaniesiono następnie do próby spawania do akademii górniczej w Krakowie. Okazało się, że spawy były niedobre, szyny trzeba było wymontować, nowe założyć, zwykle, skracając starymi metodami na śruby a aluminiowe poszły na szmelc. W ten sposób stracono kilka ton aluminium. I opozycja na sekcji roboty. Aluminiowe szyny nie umiają w Polsce zakładać, bo brak fachowców na spawanie aluminium.')

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15. "There is a shortage of many important raw materials, shellac, insulation materials, copper, electrical cables, electrical 'lead' (only buildings of 1st class importance receive cables), and electrical switches. Automatic switches do not exist at all. The number of Soviet electrical parts is insufficient; more are coming from Germany and Western Europe.
16. "The Nowa Huta combine has no electric petrol station Sic. The town of Nowa Huta has only one petrol station. The combine is short of lubricants. So they use substitutes or no lubricant at all with the result that motors are quickly damaged.
17. "Construction firms do not finish the buildings completely as this does not pay. To give a house the final touches takes too much time and diminishes the norms. So they leave windows and doors unhung, the floors unfinished, etc. The workers of the factory that moves in later finish the undone work of the building workers in their sections in their free time. Electricians at Nowa Huta had to hang windows and plaster walls. The building firms leave for some other part of Poland and start building a new complex which pays better than to finish the old one.
18. "When the road to Nowa Huta was built, the roadworkers who put the asphalt on the road did not wait until the installations and cables were laid. They had only one idea in mind: to accomplish their norms in time. When later the cables, installations, water-supply pipes, etc. were laid, the asphalt surface was ruined. As the firm which had made the road had finished its work and no credits for reparations were provided and as Nowa Huta itself had no credits for road repairs either, the damaged road remained as it was. The workers just put sand into the holes, and that is all.
19. "The construction plans at Nowa Huta are vague and full of mistakes. When an electrical worker, assigned to lay electrical cables or installations, meets, for example, installation tubes or cables which are not mentioned in the plans for that point, he just cuts them. Then the workers who installed the previous system have to return after some time and replace the cut parts. Production in such a section is then delayed for weeks or months and much precious material is spoiled. The space is narrow or badly planned. To lay installations, the workers have to omit other installations or disregard unforeseen obstacles. They have to solve problems which have not been mentioned in the plans or foreseen by architects or engineers. When installation workers started to lay telephone wires in the Główna Stacja Transformatorowa (Chief Transformer Station), the work was temporarily stopped for some unknown reason. In the meantime other workers came to construct water systems (wodociąg). The water systems damaged the telephone installations. Then came electrical workers. They cut through the water pipes (rurow wodociagowe) because these were in their way. Finally came heating installation workers (urządzenia grzewcze) who spoiled in turn the work of all the others. Finally the water and telephone installation workers returned. They had a heavy job repairing their tubes and pipes and arranging them in such a way that they did not damage the other systems built in the meantime. The Główna Stacja Transformatorowa lost in 1953 through all this confusion about two months of working time, and was not working in Nov 53. Its construction had then already been delayed three months. Much time is also lost everywhere by the incompetence of the mechanics. They plan their work badly; they do not prepare the oil in time, etc. This seems the fault of the norms. If there were no norms and the workers were paid for hours or for good work, they would work much more carefully.

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20. "In 1953 the head of the electric power station at Nowa Huta was a young engineer, (fnu) Steliga. His superior, Ing. (fnu) Wisniewski, managed the electric network (sieci) and the sub-stations (podstacje).

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21. [redacted] Soviet engineers arrived, however, with Soviet machine deliveries, to be present at the assembling. [redacted] one Soviet at the assembling of oil switches (wyłączniki olejowe) at high tension (wysokie napięcie). Some of the machine parts were missing. The machines were carelessly made - Stakhanovite work probably. The Soviet engineer was unable to set the matter right because some parts had been already changed for others in the USSR. When he discovered that the Poles knew more about the machine and could find substitute parts, he said, 'Do it yourself, so that it will work well'. They did - and laughed at the Soviet engineer. There is no respect among the Polish workers for Soviet 'experts'. Some of the young Polish engineers without any practical experience have proved to be better than the Soviet experts who have come specially from Moscow to teach the Poles how to use the machines. The above incident happened at the head transformer station in summer 1953.

22. "At Jaworzno near Krakow there is an electric power station (siłownia) which gives electric current to the local factory. The power station waited two days for the arrival of a Soviet engineer to install Soviet transformers. When he finally arrived he expressed satisfaction that the Poles had been waiting for him. But when he saw how well the Poles knew their job he said in surprise, 'Do it by yourself, you know your job better than I do!'. This happened in autumn 1953.

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Wages

23. "The Soviet engineers employed at Nowa Huta get a monthly salary of 4500 zł.; their Polish opposite numbers get only 1800 zł. The average monthly income of a worker at Nowa Huta is 500-600 zlotys. A foreman gets 1,200-1,500 zł. The salaries of engineers of sections are only a little higher or the same as foremen's. Most of the managers are young, post-World War II Communist-trained engineers.

24. "Because the young engineers earn so little money, they sometimes go at night with the workers to do simple digging as unskilled labor to earn extra money. An engineer can at best buy himself a motorcycle of Polish origin. [redacted] saw an engineer with a proper car at Nowa Huta. There are only some official cars, but they are often under repair because they are handled so roughly by the mechanics at the car repair workshop.

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Living Conditions

25. "The workers at Nowa Huta feel they are badly paid. They are also dissatisfied with housing conditions. The workers' houses are rather primitive, of bricks covered with natural mortar. The staircases are bad and so narrow that two men cannot pass. The Nowa Huta works has only two central heating boiler-houses. As the workers in the boiler room get premia for economizing on coal, the average temperature in the workshops and houses is

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very low. Only a few blocks have household gas. Most kitchens use coal. The electric and other insulation material is of inferior quality. Most of the houses are built as workers' hostels. Rooms are only 3 x 3.5 m. Four people are lodged in one such room. The beds are bunks, as in a military barracks. For this kind of accommodation the workers pay four zloty per day. There are only a few blocks for families. Younger workers share their bed with their wives in the presence of three other men. The family blocks have one and two room flats. A family with only one or two children gets one room. Families with more than two children get two rooms. As husbands do not make enough to keep the family, wives work at Nova Huta too. The children are left in a kindergarten. For two rooms the workers pay 150 zlotys monthly.

27. "The late arrival of building equipment made it necessary to build poor housing. Water pipes and other pipes were laid on the outside of houses, so that they freeze in winter. Pipes are also laid inside the houses in a crazy manner. In passages they run along the low ceiling so that people knock their heads against them. This has given some workers the chance to get a premium for an 'invention': they proposed that the metal pipes should be covered with old cut-up automobile tires. This was actually done. The houses at Nova Huta are built without rainpipes, as these were not provided. In order to prevent the cellars from filling with water, the sidewalks along the houses slope outwards.
28. "In 1953 Nova Huta had 30,000 inhabitants. Of the 30,000 workers, 20,000 live on the site and 10,000 in Krakow, in whatever rooms they can manage to rent.
29. "On the site the plant is supposed to provide the workers with lunch. There is only one kitchen to cook this lunch for the 30,000 workers. It is served at several canteens to which the food is taken by the same trucks which cart coal, sand, etc., at other times. The workers have a 15-minute interval for lunch. As the canteens are few, a number of the workers have a two km. walk to the nearest canteen. They cannot manage to walk there and back in 15 minutes and therefore have to forego the lunch and eat the food they have with them or lunch in a milk bar.
30. "On the entire site of Nova Huta there is no laundry. The workers have to do their own washing in cold water. The water in the hostels is supposed to be warm but is not as the pipes are badly insulated. It is not possible to heat water in the hostels.
31. "This poor housing is the most discouraging factor for families at Nova Huta. It is a usual thing for a husband to live in one hostel and his wife in another. When they have a child, it is sent to a creche.
32. "In the whole of Nova Huta there is one cinema seating 200. And for all the 30,000 workers there are no sporting grounds. As the workers are starved for entertainment in Nova Huta they go, like children, every evening to the swing in the town's little amusement park. As few have money to permit themselves entertainment in Krakow's dance halls or restaurants, they go and see every evening the same program whenever a circus comes to Nova Huta. The naive circus artists say: 'We have our best customers in Nova Huta. What a nice public there is at Nova Huta!'

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33. "For the workers living in Krakow life is no easier. Work at Nowa Huta begins at 6 am. To get there on time, workers have to get up at 3 am. Work finishes at 2 pm and practically every day there is a meeting after two. Nobody can evade such meetings, as the working cards are kept locked up until they are over. Nobody can stamp the cards before then. This prolongs the worker's day appreciably, as no meeting lasts less than one or two hours. The office personnel do not suffer so much: their day is 8 am - 4 pm, and the meeting is included in their working hours.
34. "As the workers who are late to work three times can be punished by a labor camp sentence, they sometimes risk their lives to reach Nowa Huta from Krakow on time. Tramway No. 5 links the two towns. Along the road Wierzyńska Ulica and the suburb Czyżna the trees and telephone posts are much too near the tramway line. As workers cling to the tramway on all sides, accidents are frequent. They lose hands or legs or get killed by being knocked against the trees. The automatic switches on the tram lines (automaty wyłączające prąd) are of bad construction. Sometimes the tramways catch fire; people run out in a panic and get hurt.
35. "The family of a worker killed in such a way gets a bonus of 4000 zlotys. The trade union pays this sum. After many accidents the trade union took steps to force the tramway to improve travelling conditions. The argument was not that the workers got killed but that the union could not afford to pay out such money.
36. Clothing
Workers usually go to town and to work in their dirty working overalls. The tramway smells. Hooligans try not to pay for the ticket. There are quarrels and fights on the tramway. As four workers share a room at the hostels and not all are honest in Poland nowadays with poverty everywhere, most of the workers prefer not to have any Sunday clothes at all; for the four there is only one common cupboard at the hostels. The result is that most of the workers go about in their dirty overalls after work and even dance in them. Official propaganda cheers this: 'Krakow is acquiring more and more the look of a workers' town. More and more nice blue workers' overalls mix with the city dress!' The workers just laugh at such nonsense. If they could, they would like to dress properly.
- Security
37. "The Nowa Huta combine is guarded by KBW (Internal Security Corps troops) and by the Industrial Guard (Straz Przemyslowa). The area is partly surrounded by concrete walls and partly by barbed wire. Since the Nowa Huta foundry is still not in production (as of late 1953) such measures are rather ridiculous. But the authorities in Poland are afraid of sabotage and 'diversionists'. The workers have to produce their identity cards (przepustka) on entering the plant area. The control is so careless, however, that a person who produced a tramway card of the same color would be passed.
- Workers' Attitudes
38. "Less than half of the workers at Nowa Huta belong to the CP, but most of the engineers are CP members. In the electric section there were Party meetings once a month. This section had about 500 workers. At the meetings there were 100-120 workers. Most of them were young. The attitude of the overwhelming majority of the workers is hostile towards the regime. No sabotage occurred in the electric section between March and Nov 53. But whenever it was possible the workers worked slowly or cheated the management and the state.

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The brigade in the electric power station (silownia) reported to have used 1,200 tons of cement. Their wages were paid for this norm. But when the cement factory sent in the bill it appeared that only 600 tons had been used. There was no punishment. But at a meeting of the building inspectors it was said that things could not continue like that, Nowa Huta had 'too many losses'.

39. "In July 1953, twenty workers in the section for steel construction gave notice. The section has 500 workers. This was a blow to the Nowa Huta management. It refused to accept the notice. The workers quoted the constitution and left work after two weeks' notice. The original wages of the workers as well as some premia had been cut after they had worked for some time. This often happens: a section has too small an appropriation or has not fulfilled its plan and norms because of the shortage of something, in which case the foreman may cut the wages of workers in order to keep his own. As he usually is some Party boss in his section it is not so easy to get an inspector on him or to complain. The workers then just throw up their work. Great mobility of manpower is the rule now in Poland. Everybody is in a state of migration as few earn enough to make a decent livelihood. Although the authorities try to prevent this mobility and bind the workers to their factory, those who are energetic enough and not afraid to argue leave their jobs. There is no paragraph in the constitution which forbids a worker to give up his job. If he has given notice properly he cannot be punished by any fines or imprisonment.

40. "Moral standards are low at Nowa Huta. As men and women work together, sexual intercourse during the work in the plant is not unusual. Some foremen use their power to give better work to put pressure on the women. Foremen or workers have been caught in the plant by their superiors or by guards in flagranti during working hours. In such cases the culprits have been fired from the plant. The chiefs of the personnel bureaus, Active Communists, are in very many cases entirely unscrupulous. In 1953 it happened that an office girl went to the personnel chief of the office staff and asked to be moved to a higher salary group. He answered cynically that she would get her group if she did what he wanted. The girl left him and complained. As she had connections in the CP he was fired.

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Future Project

41. "The Communists say that as soon as Nowa Huta is finished the next big project for the next Five Year Plan will be the construction of the Wisla-Bug channel, regulation of rivers and other gigantic water works on Soviet models. But nobody at Nowa Huta believes that the combine will be finished in time."

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